

GASTROESOPHAGEAL VARICEAL HEMORRHAGE

are unsuccessful in controlling blood loss or unless, with continued medical management, the patients improve neurologically and metabolically.

Variceal hemorrhage is common in our urban environment, especially in cases of chronic alcoholism. The medical management is temporizing at best; surgical therapy seems to improve long-term survival in only a few patients with good hepatocellular function. It appears that the best therapy is to prevent the most important cause of cirrhosis and portal hypertension in our society—alcohol abuse.

REFERENCES

1. Brown J: A complete treatise of preternatural tumors. London, Phil Tr Roy Soc, 1685, III, p 248
2. Laennec RT: *Traite de L'auscultation mediate*, Paris, Chaude, 1826, II, p 196
3. Sherlock S: *Diseases of the Liver and Biliary System*. Oxford, England, Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1975
4. Popper H, Hutter F: Hepatic fibrogenesis and disturbances of hepatic circulation. *Ann NY Acad Sci* 170:88-98, 1970
5. Rappaport AM, Noblauch MK, Black R, et al: Hepatic micro-circulatory changes leading to portal hypertension. *Ann NY Acad Sci* 170:48-64, 1970
6. Van Thiel DH, Stremple JF: Lower esophageal sphincter pressure in cirrhotic men with ascites—Before and after diuresis. *Gastroenterology* 72:842-844, May 1977
7. Boyer JL, Chatterjee C, Iber FL, et al: Effect of plasma-volume expansion on portal hypertension. *N Engl J Med* 275:750-755, Oct 1966
8. Zimmon DS, Kessler RE: The portal pressure-blood volume relationship in cirrhosis. *Gut* 15:99-101, Feb 1974
9. Freedman AR, Kerr JC, Swan KG, et al: Primate mesenteric blood flow—Effects of vasopressin and its route of delivery. *Gastroenterology* 74:875-878, May 1978
10. Millette B, Huet PM, Lavoie P, et al: Portal and systemic effects of selective infusion of vasopressin into the superior mesenteric artery in cirrhotic patients. *Gastroenterology* 69:6-12, Jul 1975
11. Barr JW, Lakin RC, Rosch J: Similarity of arterial and intravenous vasopressin on portal and systemic hemodynamics. *Gastroenterology* 69:13-19, Jul 1975
12. Thompson BW, Casali RE, Read RC, et al: Results of interposition "H" grafts for portal hypertension. *Ann Surg* 187:515-522, May 1978
13. Resnick RH, Chalmers TC, Ishihara AM, et al: A controlled study of the prophylactic portacaval shunt. *Ann Intern Med* 70:675-688, Apr 1969
14. Conn HO, Lindenmuth WW, May CJ, et al: Prophylactic portacaval anastomoses. *Medicine* 51:27-40, Jan 1972
15. Conn HO: Therapeutic portacaval anastomosis—To shunt or not to shunt. *Gastroenterology* 67:1065-1073, May 1974
16. Mutchnick MG, Lerner E, Conn HO: Portal-systemic encephalopathy and portacaval anastomosis—A prospective controlled investigation. *Gastroenterology* 67:1005-1019, May 1974
17. Reynolds TB: Promises! Promises! Hemodynamics and portal-systemic shunts. *N Engl J Med* 290:1483-1484, Jun 1974
18. Kanel GC, Kaplan MM, Zawacki JK, et al: Survival in patients with post-necrotic cirrhosis and Laennec's cirrhosis undergoing therapeutic portacaval shunt. *Gastroenterology* 73:679-683, Oct 1977
19. Malt RA, Sczzerban J, Malt RB: Risks in the therapeutic portacaval and splenorenal shunts. *Ann Surg* 184:279-288, Sep 1976
20. Simert G, Persson T, Vang J: Factors predicting survival after portacaval shunt. *Ann Surg* 187:174-178, Feb 1978

Electrocoagulation: Making a Curable Cancer Incurable?

IT REALLY IS AMAZING to see how well these patients have done by the electrocoagulation technique, because the method really destroys all our principles of surgical therapy for cancer. For example, if the cancer is confined within the wall of the bowel then one electrodesiccates, goes through, the wall of the bowel into the fat and the fat protrudes, the natural boundary has been broken and, in a few instances, the patient then has repeated attacks of bleeding or of infections. And, a curable cancer has eventually been made incurable by the procedure.

—CLAUDE E. WELCH, MD, *Boston*

Extracted from *Audio-Digest Surgery*, Vol. 26, No. 4, in the Audio-Digest Foundation subscription series of tape-recorded programs. For subscription information: 1577 East Chevy Chase Drive, Glendale, CA 91206